

Gentrification as an important marker of city semantics

Anna Lubecka^{*}

Introduction

The identity of each city is not only the identity of its inhabitants, but also the identity of the space they inhabit. The relationship between the place and its residents is a double cross-linking: as much shaped by the people as the people are shaped by it. Being influenced by the process of anthropomorphization, this very space becomes an active co-creator, often co-author, and quite often even a single author of the urban discourse, a never-ending narration of the city, which stretches from the past through present to the future.

Places and their architectural determinants are in fact a permanent memory, including the emotional one, which often exceeds geographic and political boundaries. And although very often it hurts, yet it is extremely necessary for the historical and geographical continuity of places was not been interrupted so that their residents could tell their story and see it in the context of what has already happened. Another time, characters-symbols inspire to make dynamic changes, like the whole history, when properly used allows one to better understand and thus build a better future.

As already indicated, in the process of remembering / forgetting, duration / decay / activity very important role is played by architecture, which models the space, giving all of it or its individual fragments specific meaning. It is a witness and a sign of changes that take place, acquiring meanings, which give it a broader historical, socio-cultural, political and economic context. Moreover, it is inside the architecture and thanks to the architecture that the memory lasts in a dynamic and creative way. Architecture is on the one hand a form of lasting within a specified time period of the past, on the other hand - directed at the future it allows to tame it.

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate how and to what extent is a multi-faceted urban discourse narrated by nonverbal, architectural language, with particular emphasis on the role of revitalization projects in this process. They also often lead to the gentrification

^{*} dr hab., prof. UJ. - Jagiellonian University Institute of Public Affairs

of areas previously marginalized, which significantly shapes the semantics of the entire area of the city by giving specific meanings to particular places or creating new contexts for them. In this process it is important for the memory of places communicated by their architecture, to be understood according to the metaphor of compost used in the laboratory of intercultural dialogue of the 'Pogranicze' Foundation.

Memory is not garbage, but a useful intellectual and emotional knowledge, it is like roots, to which one has to get back, because only then one can achieve the effect of a dialogue synergy in time. Thanks to it the outgoing changes will create new narratives with new characters and new message, contributing to a build a dialogue reality for which diversity is a genuine value.

1. Space in palimpsestic identity of a city. A city as a hiper-text and a story within a story

Analyzing a town as a text which is created constantly by the people as well as by the way in which they organize the space by introducing to it particular meanings, it should be perceived as a palimpsestic metatext which never stops being read. Similarly to the Arnolfini Portrait by Jan van Eyck which uses the *mise en abyme* technique, multiplied portraits of a town reflect in each other representing in different shades and configurations the needs and desires, and even dreams of its citizens. At the same time urban narration also refers to the polyphonic technique of a story within a story where particular elements of the town landscape, gradually discovered by the reader, reveal the past that is inside them and at the same time are a projection of the future, thus creating a never-ending story. Conceptualization of an urban narration may also use a metaphor of an open text developing in time like Umberto Eco's *opera aperta* in which the endings are constantly being added by every citizen of the towns' space and by each architectural element of it introduced to the already existing architectural plan.

In such dynamically written story individual aspects interfere with the social groundwork on the social fabric of overlapping threads, individual unit. This way it becomes a collective-private publicized discourse, presenting oneself and others, strangers, guests or unwanted newcomers. Some of them spent a long time in the town's space, adding their own symbols with particular meaning, others lasted for only a few moments. Quite often they were important enough to influence the town's structure and to become a part of it for good. They are the ones that last as witnesses of the past events or, due to political changes, are removed by force, cease to exist destroying a part of reality that they

represented. Erasing it from consciousness, pushing into the abyss of oblivion. Sometimes, however, they last like stigmata and do not allow painful wounds to scar up.

Thus, particular elements of the city and its stories shine through each other, building a highly complex narrative structure, which has always, albeit with varying intensity, sometimes more or less clearly, refer to the history. Older layers emerge in places that have not yet been redefined where the past has been left in its original form. Entirely new meanings occur most often at the suburbs of urban agglomeration, which are in the middle of planning and shaping by their new inhabitants. Sometimes, however, they take up old town structure trying to acquire already existing meaning or to deny them in order to begin creating a new ethos. Examples of such activities are the processes of revitalization, which often give a new meaning to an old, often used up meanings, by creating new features. The basic architectural form avoids destruction, and transformed becomes an intergenerational bridge for dialogue. Finally, there are abandoned spaces, just waiting to get used, adopted and to given a function in creating the narration of the city. So the city space constantly reads itself, drawing from their accumulated narrative potential gathered through time by different threads, depending on who is the author of the story, and who is its recipient.

We should emphasize that in the spatial narration of the city common, social, individual and personal themes interweave and complement each other, rule out or impose shared motives on each other. Big meta-narrations involving large cultural-language groups, often the entire nation, coexist with micro-narrations created by individual residents, to meet in a dialogue, or, conversely, give rise to a conflict.

Heterogeneous identity of the city is evident in its multiculturalism, with all its signs. It manifests itself not only in a concentrated form in ethno-landscapes created by neighboring districts, which are a transferred fragments of cultures of the immigrants inhabiting them. Also single elements built in a space marked by cultural codes of the majority are a sign of it. 'Turkish House' in Kraków, which was created by adding a minaret in 1910 to an already existing building at ul. Długa 31, is just one of many examples, illustrating this process. It was built by a Pole, Teodor Rayski, who wanted to build a house in Kraków, for his beloved wife, a Muslim from Egypt.

On the one hand, the strangeness of form of message in the context of Polish culture of Kraków surprises, on the other hand it may be regarded as a sign of openness to otherness, and an attempt to extend its frame of reference for understanding the world. In the context of the multicultural city, 'the Turkish house' serves as a symbolic attempt by Christian Europe to start a dialogue in this particular case with the values of the Islamic

Orient. This test is done in the European mental edges with a silent, but not powerless language of architecture, communicating clearly and unambiguously defined values referring to the specific cultural framework. On the other hand, this language only encourages dialogue, and without imposing and compulsion. It is an invitation and challenge, a boundary and its crossing.

Note that the changeability of the narration, whether in synchronic or diachronic term, is possible due to the enormous potential of the language of architecture, rich, varied, pointed or symbolic, as a rule, only inviting to explore relevant meanings. This language is pragmatic, but also deeply symbolic, aesthetic and ethical and is reflected in every architectural project, whether it is a public or a private building, and even space apparently nobody's, abandoned, forgotten, waiting for the sign and to be taken into possession of. It may equally be created by private homes, castles and palaces, theaters, libraries, museums, schools and hospitals, monuments, or just empty pedestals, parks, cemeteries, areas of degraded land, industrial land, slums, *favelas* and rich suburbs. In addition, plans for building various quarters of the city, individual streets and squares, bridges, overpasses, roundabouts, etc. are elements of that language.

The value of the encoded message by the language of architecture depends on the basic relationship between the sign - *signifiant* and the meaning - *signifié* as expressed by de Saussure, which dynamically changes in time as a consequence of existing fashions, like the latest one on cultural diversity. They are inextricably linked, appearing both in the city treated as a homogeneous whole, as well as in its individual components, those already existing as well as potential ones. The final valuation of sent messages is redefined as a result of socio-political-cultural changes. Some of them completely disappear from the area of the city and thus a part of the city's semantics disappears. New signs and meanings, not entirely created and needing time to validate, appear.

This way, it is mostly the emotional meaning that evolves which is a very specific experience in the Polish history and the history of many Polish cities. Take for instance the borderland cities, the two most symbolic - Vilnius and Lvov. It is their architecture that determines their Polish identity. On the one hand, this architecture is inscribed in the traditions and values of the Catholic Europe, on the other hand, it is marked by the Polish cultural-historical and patriotic-libertarian ethos. Ostra Brama [a chapel], St. Casimir's Chapel modeled on the Wawel's Sigismund Chapel, in which silver-plated statue of Jogaila, Casimir IV Jagiellon, John I Albert, Alexander Jagiello, Sigismund I the Old,

Sigismund II Augustus and St. Casimir are kept – these are only two selected examples illustrating how this process is taking place every day.

Similarly to our natural language, also in the architectural language of the city one can distinguish semantic units of various sizes that combine like the units of a natural language and build more complex structures with a more complete information. Also lexemes appear, single architectural structures that serve as basic units of meaning with a defined socio-cultural function. These are cafes, tearooms, brasseries and pubs, traditional restaurants, or various types of fast food restaurants, where food is not celebrated, flavors are neutralized, and the anthropological understanding of feasting as a meetings and building relationships has been reduced to only meet the basic biological need – to eat.

Their presence creates certain cultural rhythms, divides the space by assigning it to certain groups, or opens it as a place completely public, shared and belonging to anyone who wants to be in them. Combined in a larger space into syntagmes or complete sentences they define it in a more comprehensive way, creating different messages, fuller, more complex and unambiguous. Fast-food restaurants integrated into shopping centers reinforce the main message of social order of consumption appropriate to the mass- culture of the postmodern era. Finally, the combination of bigger units creates a text, such as narration throughout the district or an urban quarter, downtown and suburbs, etc.

Reading the city by exploring its various palimpsestic layers should be treated as a hypertext, where the linearity and logical order are not always respected, and decide on the created semantics. It is like a labyrinth of branching hyper-graph images and transparent overlays that make hyper-maps (Ned, 1974, p. 159-161). Individual elements of architectural language come together in a variety of relationships, thus diversifying the messages sent. In modern cities, these changes are very dynamic and multidimensional, which often makes it difficult to read and properly interpret in consistency with the assumptions of their authors.

Again, on the one hand the entire space of the city establishes a context for interpretation of everything that happens within it, on the other hand, each element can be the context for itself, it can live its own life, limiting its relevance to what it directly communicates. As a rule, however, a multiplicity of messages results in synergy, which allows to treat the urban space as a whole, heterogeneous, but by its diversity predisposed to act as host to all forms of otherness. In principle, they should lead to a dialogue, without losing its autonomy and its proper identity. Although they form a number of divisions and boundaries, their aim is not to divide. Is this how the reality of all cities looks like, does

their cultural multiplicity constitute their values and their wealth, or is it quite the opposite, a utopian vision where multicultural reality poses a real danger of a conflict?

2. The Boarder Challenge

The history of many urban districts, like the Kraków's Kazimierz district, show that the life of the urban space is stretched between its unchanging and ever-evolving sites with different identities and different narratives. At their crossroads tension are formed, cracks in its socio-cultural structure. Architecture sets the boundaries and the corresponding border cases for people on each side. It also affects the stories, which meaning and interpretation depend on how they situate themselves in relation to the boarders - those real ones, and, perhaps even more importantly, those mental, emotional, physically non-existent ones. They are often individual projections of one's fears and prejudices, they often grow up from stereotypes, finally, they are often modeled by the politicians and for the use of various ideologies. Exactly these boundaries are extremely effective in dividing each space into two areas remaining in opposition to each other by their saturation with mutually exclusive meanings. This is how *orbs interior* and *orbs exterior* are created.

The first term stands for the familiarised, well-known, friendly and safe space, where the residents fully identifying with it. It is a value and an important part of their identity. Whereas, the second space is inhabited by strangers, by the others, raises ambivalent feelings: it attracts and interests people, but at the same time frightens and repels. Thus, on the one hand it calls the desire to destroy it, to make the source of danger disappear, but on the other hand it tempts to explore it, thereby exceeding one's own weaknesses and limitations. *Orbs interior* and *orbs exterior* of the city contribute to the formation of its mythology, creation of ghettos of taboo places which, as the time passes by, are ambiguously assessed by individual residents. In addition, these assessments are subject to change depending on fashions and ideologies, of which Kraków's Kazimierz district is an eloquent example.

Since its beginning it was a Jewish town-district with a very strong and unique identity in the context of the entire city. During the war it was a symbol of the Holocaust, and after it a deserted, degraded and desolate place, no man's land, economically, culturally and socially excluded. In the 1980's, thanks to a consistently implemented program of revitalization begins the renaissance of this district, which continues uninterrupted until today. Currently, Kazimierz continues to derive from the restored capital of the Jewish culture, successfully competing with the old Kraków.

It is its second magical soul, an entertainment center, a sacred place, and a live memory - a tribute to the Jewish past. It is fueled by its own economic success, generating new resources so that the district could flourish. If in the past the concept of border, in the meaning of closures and exclusion referred to this place, its currently formed semantics arises from entirely different premises. These are pride, prosperity and success. Revitalized architecture of Kazimierz not only resulted in the gentrification of the entire district, but above all a symbolic gentrification of the identity of its residents.

The crucial question in this context is our understanding of the border and thus understanding of otherness. The difficulty of the response stems from the fact that the semantics of the border is not clear, as the border not only divides, but can also connect, it can be an invitation to a dialogue by crossing it, but also a barrier, a warning not to venture into an area separated by it.

Such was for example the function of the historical Chinese wall, which not only was supposed to stop the external threat, but also hampered positive contacts with the world outside the wall and the exchange of experiences with others. Border, referring to its etymology, is a form of severance, of reducing the experienced reality, impoverishing by eliminating all that is external towards it. Names of many towns in Andalusia, Spain, are examples of border's function like *Jerez de la Frontera*, a town on the border of the contemporary world of the Europeans, the frontier of their knowledge and self-discovery.

This dual function of the border – providing community awareness to all those who are inside it, and underlining the strangeness in relation to those who are not on the territory set by it - is not constant in time. Flashing its historical-political rhythm, and the architecture communicates which of its functions – the excluding or including one - is more important. Walls - Berlin and Bethlehem - are examples of physical architectural barriers and signs of the lack of dialogue and understanding. One of them has already been demolished, which allows for the gradual demolition of emotional and mental borders between the two Europes. Second, separating Bethlehem from Jerusalem, stands still, preventing contact between the two neighbors, the Palestinians and the Jews. Will it ever cease to exist just like the Berlin Wall and will allow for a dialogue?

3. Architecture and the dialogue between cultures

Modern cities are, by definition, multicultural cities (Carter, 1995), also in the sense that was given to that expression in recent years, consequently leading to an even stronger cultural fragmentation. In addition to traditional differing cultural categories, such as race,

nation, etnia, religion which have always shaped the city space by introducing its specific architectural determinants, there are now new criteria. They relate to the concept of diversity which is also relevant to the traditionally mono-culture societies. These include age, gender, level of physical and mental efficiency, sexual orientation, as well as some of the so-called new ethnic minorities.

Traditional cultural diversity is reflected among others in different forms of temples, some of which have slender minarets, onion domes of the roofs, yet another Greek tympanums, slender bell towers, crosses and dragons crowning the roof trusses. It is enough to observe the changes in church architecture to recreate the map of the migration routes, especially in recent years. Not without reason David Czerny, author of the Brussels *Entropa* exhibition, which started the Czech Republic Presidency of the European Union, which shows the stereotyped images of each Member State, chose a mosque as a contemporary symbol of the Netherlands. Religious diversity is also communicated by a different rhythm of holidays, as during different days of the week, places of worship are filled with people and in a special way express the distinct identity of different religious groups.

Other urban spaces function in a similar way. Market places, or even just parts of them also express different identity of places and people who operate them. Their colors and smells are different. They attract some people and repel others, they make some people feel helpless and lost in the otherness, where the dialects are also different as well as the compulsory purchase and sale rituals. Similarly, places and buildings creating a space for the meetings, such as cafes, pubs, shopping malls, and thus giving rise to a sense of belonging and a sense of community are culturally marked. They speak the language of architecture which by giving some form to the space also assigns it a specific function.

An example showing very clearly the identifying and the exclusive-inclusive role of architecture is the market of Siena (*contrada*). Their inhabitants are competing with each other at the annual *Palio*, which takes place on the market. It is preceded by a whole year of preparation, involving all the inhabitants of particular districts, since participation in the palio is honorable and a noble duty of solidarity, pride of one's identity, linked to the specific *contrada* etc. This traditional race has its own architectural dimension.

The Siena Market and its surrounding network of medieval streets are a natural setting for this event which now attracts thousands of tourists. Painstakingly reproduced, it strengthens the processes of gentrification, not only throughout Siena, but also of less affluent neighborhoods whose residents use the opportunity to participate in palio to

change their status. Winning, and even only participating in the race, belong to the events of refining the entire district and its inhabitants not only in a symbolic term.

Thanks to *palio* public utility buildings are created in particular districts. Moreover, the involvement of virtually all residents of the *contrada* in the preparation creates a sense of solidarity, community and responsibility, and hence lower the problems of exclusion and marginalization, crime and poverty. Architecture, which inspired to ensure that the tradition is still alive, contributes to the vitality of the city also in the sense that it gained a distinctive identity, has become an easily recognizable brand, bringing a variety of benefits to the residents. *Palio* is one of the best-known attractions of the region, attracting many visitors to Siena, not only during its duration.

Transforming the architecture of the city to become a more welcoming by removing physical barriers, allows for the existence of new minorities, which, not without reason, are called silent or invisible. Only in the last few years their members have emerged as a full-fledged independent users of urban space and operators of public discourse, which takes place in it. In Poland, these changes are still very fresh and we all need to learn, to accept the right of persons with disabilities and the elderly to self-sufficiency. In the urban landscape, there are ramps, handrails, friendly and reducing physical barriers architecture, integrating people, by enabling them to meet. Slowly other groups come out of the margin, often waking the most controversial reactions of the majority, which does not want to share with them their physical space, which is the first condition of approval for a dialogue.

To say that modeling space is an expression of attitude of other users, is no exaggeration. Invitation to use it together, agreement for the introduction of important for the group symbols to it is simultaneously an act of acceptance and an invitation to a dialogue in a sense as understood by Buber (2002) and Tischner (2000, p. 18). If the dialogue is 'way out of the hideout', then the role of architecture is to construct public space in such a way to ensure the security and sense of communal belonging. Constantly transformed and culturally modeled in order to express the identity of its users, can be an invitation, but can also be a warning not to try to find a place in it for oneself and ones difference, to explore its meanings and tame it.

4. Ethno-landmarks and hyper-space versus revitalization and gentrification

Ethno-landmarks (Appadurai, 1992, p. 92) and hyperspace (see Baudrillard, Eco for: Burszta, 1998, p. 160) as two concepts of urban space in the era of postmodern culture are on two opposite ends of a continuum, which are used to define it. Ethno-landmarks,

strongly marked by cultural values through transfer mainly to the space of European and American cities small homelands of the immigrants from Asia, Africa and South America, clearly communicate not only their identity, but also to a large extent foreignness.

Hyper-spaces are anonymous and vague, which is typical of a global culture, and so everywhere similar or identical. Their clearly defined function of the airport, railway station, a network hotel etc. is their only distinguishing feature. Usability was a primary condition for their formation, which cannot give them a distinctive identity. If ethno-landscape divide the space into separate quarters, hyper-spaces neutralize the existing differences and they can be assigned the function of a cracks cohesive on the city fabric. These are places where the presence of anyone who is found in ones proper role in the society, is accepted and considered natural. They can be defined as places potentially open to all forms of multiculturalism and diversity that are not even noticed at them as foreign and inconsistent.

Hyper-spaces are a symbol of contemporary mass culture, a very pragmatic, of certain aesthetic, but lacking clarity. Their political correctness contained in their semantics is the result and effect of their imprecise identity. In contrast, ethno-landscapes have very distinct cultural identity, which makes the network of meanings created by architecture is not always obvious to strangers. It is also often controversial, and evokes strong emotional reactions. Its understanding requires a good knowledge of cultural codes, often unknown outside a particular group, through which the diasporas, although operating outside their home country, may still belong to the imaginary community (Anderson, 1990, p. 15; Gellner, 1991). Architecture operates in a dual paradigm as it cuts across the space an area culturally consistent and familiar, and by appointing the *limes*, define what is beyond it as different. The process of domestication is the process of marking by placing in a given area *sacred* and *profane* places, reflecting the values of the culture and the identity of its users. Sacred places do not apply only to religious values. It's also all these major spaces that embody necessary values to perpetuate collective and individual memory. They must be stored there, to answer the simplest question: "Who are you?".

Museums, which contain the past, cemeteries, Jewish cemeteries, national cemeteries are witness' to what was and what will help to maintain continuity in time and space. Not less important are the squares, urban planning solutions, even if they already exist, and the colors of houses, remains of defensive walls, towers, underground dungeon system etc. They all have a value, because significant values for specific social groups are included in them.

Historicity and multiculturalism / monoculturalism of the place is a very important prerequisite for revitalization projects since the decision of what facilities revitalize what function to give them, taking into account their previous one, has a number of conditions not related strictly to the architecture. Often these are ethical issues, very delicate, and the resulting from the fundamental duty of respect for the past and present members of space, which arose as a result of revitalization.

Many problems associated with the processes of revitalization also arises from the fact that architecture has very strongly typed component of power and emotion. Often, it says loudly about the previous owners of the space, who as a result of changes in political geography no longer have the right to it. However, their emotions and excitement of their cultural heirs, sometimes the whole nation, remain. Polish borderland cities are a wonderful example. They show how difficult it is to restore the interrupted historical dialogue, when the semantics of the city does not always provide for all the politically correct and accepted information. Cities split identity is confirmed by frontiersmen in their architecture, where individual elements are often revitalized and put back into the living fabric of the city, depending on the political climate between their present and former owner.

These two aspects cause, and it requires a very strong emphasis, the process of revitalization, and gentrification to characterize with great intuition and sensitivity on the one hand, and they cannot ignore historical policy or historical truth. The latter may not always be accepted for public discourse, and if it is already a topic, it may arouse controversy, often causing conflict and forgetting about the thorny 'architecture'.

Multiculturalism is a difficult challenge for the revitalization process, because by giving fragments of urban space to individual groups, formally made, often as not, the legitimacy of their presence in it. In this way, they receive the right to introduce their values to the public urban discourse, and the given space becomes one of the first stages of rooting, leaving the margin, where they have so far functioned as the so called silent or invisible minorities (Shallenberer, 1991, p. 325-334).

5. Revitalization / gentrification in the world and in Poland - two examples

As already mentioned, revitalization and gentrification belong to some very important factors which create new contexts for the existing meanings, and at the same time they communicate a set of fixed values and meanings, introducing them to the semantics of the city. They do this by changing the medium, the de Saussure's mark. This process involves

the transformation of the buildings functions, their groups or large spaces, which until now have been forgotten and often hidden as shameful, and therefore also silent and excluded from the participation in the urban discourse. Along with the change of the meaning a deep re-evaluation of the way they are assessed and understood, which in turn leads to the restoration of life to 'dead' areas, and even their 'ennoblement'. In the new centers, hearts or enclaves ennobling the space around them, liberation takes place of the up till now 'frozen' in them human potential, and at the same time of the socio-cultural, economic and political one.

These changes lead to writing new stories, each of which has its heroes, either new ones or those who along with the revitalization of the space started their 'second' life in it. It also has its losers, the marginalized ones, forgotten and excluded from public discourse. These are not always the same social groups, as evidenced by the architecture of particular parts of the city. Some of them bear traces of slowly blurring former glory, others - well maintained and wealthy - are a proof of the success of the people who inhabit them. Next years, may turn these relations around and deprive of splendor and prosperity of today winners and to give a chance to the underprivileged neighborhoods to become the main narrator.

The fact of blurring the boundaries between the center and the suburbs along with the change of their role in the structure of the city is a meaningful example. Another example are the revitalized, and even as a result of this process gentrified former industrial or commercial or port districts,, such as London's Docklands. In the apogee of the development of the British Empire it was a vibrant place, mainly due to the West India Company. There came its ships and stored all kinds of goods that came to London from the British colonies. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the Docklands practically did not exist, so that in the 80s not only to come back to life, but to become one of the most prestigious and luxurious areas of London.

A new, interesting architecture, inspired by history and using existing port buildings or even directly reminding of their functions in the past, like the coffee and tea museum, emphasizes the unique identity of Docklands, on the other hand, it introduces solutions on a twentieth century scale. Actions implemented with the consideration of this dual philosophy, allowed not only to revitalize the district, but also led to its gentrification. Modern infrastructure, high-speed monorail linking various islands, luxury hotels with a marina (Canary Wharf), comfortable apartments attracted to the Docklands London's yuppies. Their economic status and the consequent lifestyle gave quite a new character to

the Docklands, making them an enclave of luxury and a symbol of success. At the same time invisible boundaries were built around them, carving the entire Docklands area from the rest of the city. This time, however, these boundaries were not so much excluding the Docklands residents as others who could not be found inside this district, in order to fully utilize this place of desire, because they could not boast of a spectacular economic and professional life success.

In Poland, one of the many positive examples of how to revitalize, reconciling the interests of various groups, and eventually lead to gentrification of industrial areas – mining areas, is the Silesia City Center along with the surrounding area. Part of this shopping centre, which was founded in 2005, is a chapel, situated in a historic building that was once housing a winding machine of the neighboring ‘Jerzy’ shaft. St. Barbara Chapel, the patroness of miners, was created as a tribute for Silesia and its inhabitants, and especially for the mining past of the place where now the centre is situated. Thus, the created place of worship functions not only in a way typical for it, but also host guest artists performing in programs connected thematically to the religious topic. The idea of the investor, at the beginning very controversial, finally gained public acceptance, and was even considered exemplary. Drastic change of the function of a place, which since 1982 up to 1994, when coal mining was finally closed, has been associated with mining, does not result in forgetting about its past.

Silesia City Center is only one of the elements of the revitalized area, entering new cultural values in to the place already marked by the history. Winding wheels from the old shaft ‘Jerzy’, trolleys transporting coal, observation tower, etc. are a reminder of what has happened in this area. There is also a café AlmiCafe and showroom AlmiDecor in a historic building that used to be a pool, and previous to that, a boiler and mine’s compressor "Cleofas".

As previously mentioned, this is a revitalization project that surely deserves to be called a success. It is also a sensitive and an intelligent design, which builds the potential of the place through a creative use of its past in a natural way coexisting with the present. Such a treatment of revitalized space in addition meets important social expectations. The history of Silesia and its ordinary people has found yet another scene, thus valuing its ordinary residents. At the same time this place is alive, it is visited by young people, and although it creates a certain border in history, it is rather a border connecting generations, rather than separating them from each other. If we agree with the statement that revitalization and even more gentrification is inspired by the memory of the place,

restoring it to its former function, but also drastically changing its destiny, and often using its creative tension between the past and the future, create new and better quality of life, projects around the Silesia City Center show how this effect can be achieved in practice. Equally true in relation to this point is the thesis that, acting in many sizes and forms, revitalization and gentrification are a significant element inspiring changes in the semantics of the city and dynamically shaping the dialogue inspired by its diversity.

Conclusion

Processes of revitalization, in many cases leading to gentrification, are becoming a more and more popular way of transforming urban space and at the same time of administering it. Challenges associated with these processes are not only purely architectural, but also socio-cultural and even political and economic. Quite often decisions on what to revitalize and how to balance the ratio between the old and the new function, memory and oblivion, validation of one group and the reduction of social visibility of another are embers of social conflict, rather than a source of dialogue. By changing the economic status of the revitalized areas it is possible to recover them from the margin, to boost confidence of their residents, to stimulate them to act and to introduce them to the mainstream of society, which in turn means creating new opportunities for them to function in the city on the rights of a rightful citizen. These changes of individual identities result in the creation of the new urban identity, a diverse identity, multiple, yet holistically consistent and using its capital of differences.

Bibliography

1. Anderson B., (1990), *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London.
2. Appadurai A., (1992), *Global Ethnoscapes. Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology*, [in:] R. Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.
3. Buber M., (2002) , *Between Man and Man*, Scribners/Macmillan, New York.
4. Burszta W.J., (1998), *Antropologia kultury*, Zysk i S-ka, Warszawa.
5. Carter D., (1995), *Invisible Cities: Touba Turin, Senegalese Transnational Migrants on Northern Italy*, University of Minneapolis Press.
6. Gellner E., (1991), *Narody i nacjonalizmy*, PIW, Warszawa.
7. Nelson Th.H., (1974), *Computer Lib/Dream machines*, Distributors.
8. Shallenberer D., (1991), *Invisible Minorities: Coming out of the Classroom Closet*, „Journal of Management Education”, vol. 15, no. 3.
9. Tischner J., (2000), *Etyka solidarności*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków.

Summary

A city creates and communicates its identity by means of spaces and places marked with definite socio-cultural meanings. Using literary metaphors it is a text, dense with various meanings which resembles palimpsest, hypertext, *mise en abyme* or even a polyphonic Chinese box story. It uses an amalgam of languages of architecture such as hyperspaces, ethnospaces, marginalized and degraded places, socially and culturally stigmatized areas as well as sacred places positively imbued with national or even civilization symbols. Thus it says much more and with much more precision than the form and the function of places and buildings themselves because it creatively explores the dialogue between de Saussure's *significant* and *signifié*, meaning and sign, whose dynamic relations and interpretations are context-bound.

Gentrification plays a double role in the process as on the one hand it actively creates an interpretational context and on the other it itself generates meanings. It does it by changing the form, the *signified* while reconstructing buildings and spaces, which so far have been forgotten, even hidden and excluded from the city discourse. Gentrification results in a deep change in the value of the place which becomes a new focal point and a new heart empowering its inhabitants. It also becomes a social cohesion factor. The socio-cultural potential of the gentrified areas or buildings generates new semantic contexts, often a source of the intangibles.

Gentrification often gets inspired with past and memory trying to revive old places and to retrieve their functions. It may also often drastically change them by looking to the future, but the most often it uses the creative tensions between the past and the present to improve the quality of life. It works in various forms and in many areas, and its multidimensional character makes it one of the most important city markers influencing its semantics and the multicultural dialogue for which each city is a natural architect.

The aim of the article is to explore the above issues and their role and value for an on-going city dialogue or even a polylogue.

Key words: city, hypertext, identity, dialogue, revitalization- gentrification